



Nevada: Home To America's Wild Horses and Burros

Spirit of the American West

“Congress finds and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West . . .” contributing “. . . to the diversity of life forms within the Nation and . . .” enriching “. . . the lives of the American people.”

These words are from the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act unanimously passed by Congress on December 15, 1971. Congress set forth legislation to protect, manage and control wild horses and burros on public lands.

Wild horses and burros are to be “part of the American scene.” The U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Forest Service, are charged with protecting and managing these animals as components of the public lands. The goals include achieving and maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on the lands.

In Nevada, most wild horses and burros are found on public lands managed by the BLM.

Historically, early explorers' journals indicate horses were in northern Nevada by the 1820s. Peter Ogden's 1828 journal talks of discovering and capturing horses apparently abandoned by Indians and of later seeing evidence of a large horse herd.

The California-bound party lead by John Bidwell in 1841, documented several sightings of horses, and several thefts of their own animals. One Nevada author, Anthony Amaral, claims that by the 1870s wild horses were quite visible in the state.

In several areas, ranchers turned loose Shires, Percherons, Hambletonians, Morgans and Irish stations and mares to set a standard and pattern in herds in their geographic areas. Heavy boned animals capable of pulling wagons, rather than light saddle horses, appear to have been favored. Cavalry mounts may have added to Nevada's wild horse population.

Burros were brought to the West by Jesuit missionaries and were later used extensively by miners. When mining camps failed, the burros were set free to roam the desert.

As ranchers or miners demanded horses or burros, the animals were trapped and trained for the purposes of man. With the advent of the steam engine and tractor and the return of soldiers from World War II, the equines were less in demand and multiplied as the horse and burro has few natural predators. Unless a local rancher or miner claimed a herd, no one seemed to own the animals. Some individuals, called “mustangers,” captured the animals and sold them to slaughterhouses. Their inhumane methods caught the attention of Velma “Wild Horse Annie” Johnston of Reno, Nevada, who mounted a campaign first to stop inhumane roundups and then to give the animals Federal protection.

Today, Nevada and nine other western states manage wild horses and burros. Nevada is home to more than half of the Nation's wild horses. Those animals live in more than 100 Herd Management Areas (HMAs).

Challenges in the program vary from how many animals can be supported on rangelands where water and vegetation are limited and shared with other species, to how to place and care for wild horses and burros removed from the lands.



CHRIS ROSS

Population Management

When there are too many animals for the vegetation and water available, all species suffer, as does the rangeland.

Healthy rangelands have a variety of vegetative species and support a mix of animals: wildlife, wild horses and burros and domestic livestock. Wildlife is regulated by the state which determines where and when hunting can occur. Livestock numbers are regulated by stipulations in permits issued to ranchers. The primary method of keeping wild horse and burro numbers in check is to gather and remove "excess" animals.

Specialists in range management and biology monitor rangeland plants and water, and recommend how many animals should be in an area. Through a public process, recommendations for all species are discussed. Wild horse and burro numbers set for a particular HMA are called Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs).

When AMLs are exceeded, BLM plans and oversees a "gather." In Nevada, most horses and burros are gathered via helicopter provided by a contractor. Horses are herded into a temporary trap site, made up of jute wings which funnel the horses into portable corrals.

The equines are sorted by sex and age. Younger animals are transported to a preparation center where they are readied for adoption to private citizens who will give them a good home. Older animals, which have a

knowledge of the herd's territory, are released into the HMA where they often thrive with less competition for forage and water.

Normally, gathers in Nevada occur during the non-foaling season which is July through late February. Occasionally, emergency situations such as drought, severe winters or wildland fires necessitate emergency gathers.

Since 1992, Nevada BLM has fostered a fertility control project to slow population growth. Once perfected by scientists, this immunocontraception project could give BLM another tool to achieve and maintain AMLs.



JOHN WINPENINIKX

Adopt a Living Legend

Many American citizens have adopted a wild horse or burro. These sturdy creatures have qualities which lend themselves to endurance riding and similar activities which require good feet and the knowledge a creature on the range learns from fending for itself.

An adopter must have adequate facilities to provide humane care and treatment for the adopted animal. A corral or enclosed pasture of approximately 400 square feet, with fencing six feet high for horses or five feet high for burros, and a shelter is required. Rounded pipes, poles or similar materials without protrusions are best. Animals may also be stabled. Inspections of facilities will be made by a local BLM employee.

To adopt, you must be 18 years of age, and have no convictions for inhumane treatment of animals. Parents or legal guardians often adopt a horse or burro and allow children to assist in caring for and training the animal.

In Nevada, BLM has a permanent center where wild horses and burros gathered from public lands receive inoculations, are freeze marked with a unique registration number, and are tested to make sure they do not have Equine Infectious Anemia. Adopters receive the animal's health card so they can continue care.

One year after signing the adoption agreement, an individual who has given the animal proper care and maintenance may apply for and receive title to the horse or burro.

The base adoption fee is \$125 per animal. Competitive bidding is employed at adoptions sponsored at temporary locations where the animals have been transported to be more convenient to the public. These "satellite" adoptions are listed on the Internet, at <http://www.blm.gov/whb>.

Nevada's permanent site is located at Palomino Valley, north of the Reno-Sparks area. Pre-approved adopters may call for appointments, (775) 475-2222.



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Where Did My Horse or Burro Roam?

Many individuals who adopt wild horses or burros through the BLM, are interested in the birthplace of their equine family member.

Today wild horses and burros in Nevada are managed in about 100 Herd Management Areas (HMAs). A state map shows the HMAs and the BLM office which administers the geographic area. Most HMAs are on BLM-managed public lands. A few HMAs adjoin Forest Service wild horse "territories" and that agency has the administrative lead.

Two HMAs enjoy special status. The Nevada Wild Horse Range is about 394,000 acres in the northeast corner of Nye County. It is cooperatively managed by the BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the Department of Defense. It was designated a wild horse range in 1962, nine years prior to the Act.



MAXINE SHANE

The Marietta Wild Burro Range near Hawthorne, Nevada, is the nation's only formally recognized wild burro range. At 68,000 acres, it is home to about 85 burros, and was dedicated in 1991, the 20th anniversary of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act.

In 1971, BLM was directed to identify Herd Areas where animals were located. Since passage of the Act, the BLM has inventoried and mapped those Herd Areas. Through its planning process, which includes extensive public participation, the areas where horses can be managed as a component of the public lands have been designated; these areas are HMAs. One example of why a Herd Area may not have become a HMA is where intermingled public and private lands made management of private stock with public horses difficult. If you have a horse from outside a HMA, it could have come from a Herd Area and that name will not be on this map.

Mapping of HMAs and Herd Areas was once done by hand. With modern technology, like Geographic Information Systems (GIS), precise mapping is possible. The horse and burro areas in Lander, Eureka, Esmeralda and Nye Counties are being refined in GIS and likely will be smaller than HMAs shown.

Herd Management Areas (and Assigned Code)

Antelope	NV401	Horse Mtn	NV307	Seven Troughs	NV216
Antelope Valley	NV107	Hot Creek	NV616	Shawave Mtns.	NV218
Applewhite	NV518	Jackson Mtns	NV208	Silver Peak	NV623
Armagosa	NV511	Jakes Wash.	NV408	Snowstorm Mtns	NV201
Ash Meadows	NV509	Johnnie	NV510	South Shoshone	NV601
Augusta Mtns	NV311	Kamma Mtns	NV214	South Stillwater	NV309
Bald Mtn	NV603	Lahontan	NV306	Spruce-Pequop	NV109
Black Rock Range East	NV209	Lava Beds	NV215	Stone Cabin	NV618
Black Rock Range West	NV227	Little Fish Lake	NV614	Stonewall	NV627
Blue Nose Peak	NV514	Little Humboldt	NV102	Tobin Range	NV231
Blue Wing Mtns	NV217	Little Mtn	NV519	Warm Springs Canyon	NV226
Buck & Bald	NV403	Little Owyhee	NV200	Wassuk	NV312
Buffalo Hills	NV220	Marietta	NV316	Wheeler Pass	NV507
Bullfrog	NV629	Maverick-Medicine	NV105	Whistler Mtn	NV608
Butte	NV407	Mcgee Mtn	NV210	White River	NV409
Calico Mtn	NV222	Meadow Valley Mtns	NV513	Wilson Creek	NV404
Callaghan	NV604	Miller Flat	NV520		
Cherry Creek	NV406	Montgomery Pass	NV317		
Clan Alpine	NV310	Monte Cristo	NV402		
Clover Creek	NV517	Montezuma Peak	NV625		
Clover Mtns	NV516	Moriah	NV413		
Deer Lodge Canyon	NV521	Mormon Mtns	NV512		
Delamar	NV515	Muddy Mtns	NV503		
Desatoya	NV606	Nevada Wild Horse Range	NV524		
Diamond	NV609	New Pass-Ravenswood	NV602		
Diamond Hills North	NV104	Nightengale Mtns	NV219		
Diamond Hills South	NV412	North Stillwater	NV229		
Dogskin Mtn	NV302	Owyhee	NV101		
Dry Lake	NV410	Palmetto	NV624		
El Dorado Mtns	NV501	Paymaster-Lone Mtn	NV621		
Fish Creek	NV612	Pilot Mtn	NV314		
Fish Lake Valley	NV622	Pine Nut	NV305		
Flanigan	NV301	Rattlesnake	NV523		
Fox-Lake Range	NV228	Red Rock	NV504		
Garfield Flat	NV313	Reveille	NV619		
Gold Butte	NV502	Roberts Mtn	NV607		
Gold Mtn	NV628	Rock Creek	NV103		
Goldfield	NV626	Rocky Hills	NV605		
Goshute	NV108	Sand Springs East	NV405		
Granite Peak	NV303	Sand Springs West	NV630		
Granite Range	NV221	Saulsbury	NV620		
Hickison	NV610	Seaman	NV411		
Highland Peak	NV522	Seven Mile	NV613		

The Herd Management Areas (HMAs) on this map are under the jurisdiction of the BLM in Nevada. Field offices are headquartered in Elko, Winnemucca, Carson City, Elko, Las Vegas and Battle Mountain. Field stations are in Tonopah and Caliente. There are wild horse and burro specialists in each office or station. The BLM Nevada program leader for the wild horse and burro program is in the Nevada State Office, Reno.

In northwestern Nevada, there are some HMAs which are managed by the BLM's Northern California Management Team (NORCAL). Those HMAs are not shown on this map.

Nevada Herd Management Areas

